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BINET-SIMON TEST IN PRACTICAL USE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF HINSDALE, ILLINOIS

JESSIE MARTIN ALEXANDER
Hinsdale, Illinois

The success of a teacher is usually judged by the standard of work she is able to secure from her pupils. This is especially unfair to the first-grade teacher, as the only requirement for entrance is that of age. By the time the children have reached the second grade they have been sifted to a certain extent, although many are sent on who are not mentally ready for the work. Usually nearly one-third of the first-grade children would benefit by taking work more slowly.

Last year I decided to test my fifty-three first-grade pupils and group them according to their mental ages. The first three weeks of school were spent in getting acquainted with the children and dividing them very carefully into three classes: *first*, the brightest; *second*, the average; *third*, the slow.

The test began with the brightest pupils and proceeded down to the slowest. The first surprise came when the boy whom I had supposed to be the brightest child in the room was found to have an intelligence quotient (I.Q.) of 126, but was surpassed by four others, one testing 134. Comparing ages, I found that this apparently brightest pupil was a year older than the other children, which maturity had given him the advantage of seeming more intelligent.

In the second group were two children with very high rating, who, however, had been doing very mediocre work. For some reason they had not been interested; but upon being placed in Class 1 they soon made up the work skipped and proved their right to stay there.

A child in Class 3 showed an I.Q. of 121. His trouble proved to be entirely due to physical conditions.

In many cases it hardly seemed possible that the pupils should be grouped as I had to rearrange the classes after the testing was finished, but time proved each case to be better placed than at the first classification. Perhaps the greatest help of all came from the clearer understanding of each individual child—the change of attitude on my part. The pupil of average or above average mentality could be reached in one way or another and it evidently was the teacher's place to do it.

While many in Class 1 might well have been promoted a half-year earlier, conditions made it impossible. They were, therefore, given much extra work and allowed to progress as rapidly as possible.

Many special cases throughout the school system have been sent in for the test. One in particular was a little girl in the third grade who was failing in her work. She had been a dreamer always and many times had come to school a half-hour late with a bouquet of grasses or flowers picked on the way. In spite of the fact that she came from an excellent family, her teachers began to think her "queer," "stupid," defective. The mother asked for the test. She had an I.Q. of 108. When the report was given to her teacher, she remarked, "If she has the brains, then she will have to work." Unknown to the teacher, I tried working with the child in my own home. At first we did clay modeling of the animals in which she was interested. She showed remarkable talent and originality. The clay was cast in plaster and tinted. During that time no reading was done but much time was devoted to a discussion of animals, which led us to books for reference. She was given a book of animal stories and asked which one she would like to read. As she had no choice, we read a bit at random and looked at pictures and later started a continued story of a rabbit, reading just enough to get to the most interesting part. Soon she began reading to herself while I prepared the paints. When she asked to take the book home to finish it, she was allowed to do so. We dipped into all kinds of books on animals, until she wanted to read in order to know more about them. She began to improve with astonishing rapidity and at the end of a month her teacher, who knew nothing of the work we had been doing, exclaimed, "It is astonishing the way that child has changed; she has improved 100 per cent."

Another case very much like this was that of a boy about eleven years old, who did almost nothing in school. He, too, had a high I.Q. Although his teacher would hardly believe the report, she set about seeing what she could do. Her efforts were well repaid when he later led the entire room in a test.

The Binet test usually reveals the real difficulty. The children enjoy taking it and often confide their troubles. Such reasons as the following are given surprisingly often: "Don't like to go to school," "Just not interested," "Have to keep still," "Teacher is cross," "Can't do arithmetic."

The teachers have been unanimous in saying that the use of the test has helped them. It changes their attitude. Instead of being punished, mentally deficient pupils are given work they can do, while normal children are given a physical examination, and every inducement to make good is held out to them.